



WRAD HEALTH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023 EDITION

RUBY HUNTER NAMED AS PATRON

The late Ruby Hunter has been honoured as the latest Patron of WRAD Health.

Following discussions with her family, WRAD Health welcomed Ruby as WRAD Health's third patron, joining her long-time partner Archie Roach AM and author Paul Jennings AM.

WRAD Health will honour her name with recognition on the centre's honour board and on the WRAD Health website.

Recently retired CEO Geoff Soma, who instigated the recognition, said Ruby was a glowing example of what can be achieved through soul searching, grit and determination and love for her people and her family.

"We celebrate her wonderful life and it is pleasing that Archie and Ruby's names will be embedded in WRAD Health's rich history, alongside Paul Jennings," Geoff said.

Ruby was an Indigenous singer, art performer, mother and song writer and was born in South Australia. She has also published children's fiction and poetry as well as a musical based on her life. Ruby, who died in 2010 aged 54, was part of the Stolen Generation and suffered many traumas over time.

Her early teens were affected by substance misuse, homelessness and chaotic and painful memories.

Throughout all of this she was a strong and proud Ngarrindjeri/ Kokatha/ Pitgantgatgara woman.

"Ruby Hunter rose above significant adversity and stood tall in her support for Aboriginal women, music and the arts," Geoff said. "She was a strong role model for young people suffering from issues related to substance misuse."

In her song "Down City streets", Ruby highlighted alcohol abuse that she used to cope with her difficult life. In the line "Understand how street kids feel when they are put down" she spoke of her feelings and empathy for those struggling with life's challenges.

Geoff said WRAD Health acknowledged Ruby's family for allowing the centre to promote her as a "beacon of hope and courage for clients and families".

ARCHIE ROACH & RUBY HUNTER



Her songs and story will encourage and inspire others along the recovery road."



LIFE AT THE TOP

WRAD Health's interim management team is setting a steady course into the future.

Interim CEO Mark Powell and interim operations manager Chris Kendall say that their transition to the new roles has been challenging but enjoyable.

After three months in their new positions, both managers are appreciating the support of staff and partners.

Mark stepped up from operations manager to interim CEO following the retirement of Geoff Soma, and Chris has added the operations role to his work as clinical coordinator.

"It has been a steep learning curve but there has been lots of support, especially from staff who have been amazing and also from partnership agencies who have welcomed us to our new roles," Mark said.

"The support has been very helpful and we have been able to make connections with several organisations both locally and statewide."

Mark says compliance frameworks, staffing issues and contract obligations are among the main challenges he is facing.

"I'm learning so much, especially about organisational risk frameworks, budgets and human resources as well as maintaining oversight over the clinical and medical services. We're lucky we have good structures and committees in place which has helped to make it a smooth transition."

I like the challenge of trying to be a part of and help grow something that is of value to the community."

- MARK POWELL



Mark is appreciating making a contribution to the community. "I like the challenge of trying to be a part of and help grow something that is of value to the community. That has always been my passion and this job gives me that opportunity. I think about what the next horizons are for us to continue to provide a comprehensive service to the community."

Increasing access to mental health services and introducing other therapeutic models and allied health programs are among Mark's goals.

"The introduction of a dietitian has been an amazing benefit as physical wellbeing is so important and diet plays an integral role. We will continue to look at how we can respond to growing demands and trends such as responding to needs of neurodiversity and supporting people to get access to NDIS where appropriate," he said. "There are a lot of opportunities to think about, and that's the exciting part of a job like this. We're in a position where we can lead change and that's very stimulating."

In addition to his interim role, Chris is continuing his previous position as clinical coordinator, making for a busy but challenging time.

"I'm continuing to work directly with staff on a day-to-day basis, which has always been a passion of mine, but I've taken on a lot more governance work and strategy than I was exposed to previously," he said.

"There's a lot that's new to me. I've been looking from the outside of the role but being inside it and understanding all the mechanisms has been a great challenge and I've been pleased with how much I've learnt.

"It makes it easier that Mark is still here and we can continue to work together."

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Kayleearne Clyde has been a WRAD Health client – now she's seeing things from the other side.

Kayleearne is doing 100 hours of her second-year student placement at WRAD Health, while also spending 150 hours with GenU as she completes her Diploma of Community Services through South West TAFE.

Last year Kayleearne won the Paul Jennings award in WRAD Health's writing competition for her submission 'Strength in Recovery', detailing her five-year addiction to methamphetamines and her three years in recovery.

Her return to WRAD Health is on a much more positive note than her first encounters as a client.

"I've been here in various programs as a client but now the roles are reversed," Kayleearne said. "It's a bit different to see things from the other side and I'm very pleased with how things are going.

Kayleearne has also been on the consumer advocacy group and has kept in touch with

interim CEO Mark Powell about potentially doing a placement.

Kayleearne, 27, is at WRAD Health three days per week and spends time with different staff members to learn about their roles.

"I like to observe how different people do things differently," she said. "I guess they all have the same goals but they do things quite differently and it's interesting to see how they get to the end result."

The Diploma will open many job opportunities for Kayleearne, from case management to support work.

After this course, Kayleearne will consider a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs to open potential career opportunities in the AOD field but her ultimate goal at this stage is to work with youth.

"Youth is where I aim to be; I'm not sure how that will look but I have a lot of lived experience and I would like to use that knowledge in a positive way.

This is the first time WRAD Health has hosted a TAFE diploma student.



AFTER-HOURS SERVICE EXTENDED

WRAD Health's after-hours service is continuing with a more limited offering.

The service will now be operating on Monday and Tuesday evenings but no longer on Thursdays and it will concentrate on general medical services without a specific AOD and mental health component.

The after-hours service had been introduced as a 12-month pilot ending in June funded by Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN).

It was extended until the end of August in the

original format before recently undergoing changes in response to demand.

Interim operations manager Chris Kendall said there was strong anecdotal evidence that after hours AOD and mental health services were needed but this aspect of the pilot attracted less people than expected.

WRAD Health still supports the family and friends meeting on the third Monday of the month starting at 6.00pm and offer an online support meeting every second Tuesday. Anyone interested in attending contact Mark Powell or message via the wrad@wrad.org.au email.

NEW FINANCE TEAM

WRAD Health has a new finance team with Sandra Heath joining as accountant and Emilia Roberts as the new payroll and admin support officer.

Sandra started in June, after working for an aged care provider as a business operations manager and 11 years as a school business manager.

“It was great to have a six-week handover with Debbie Maguire before she retired,” she said.

She is enjoying the new work and the work environment.

“One of the attractions was that it offered flexible hours,” Sandra said. “WRAD has been very accommodating.”

Originally from England, Sandra did her training in her home country before moving to Australia but has since upgraded her skills locally.

She came to Australia to operate a dairy farm but has always worked off farm with a finance background, a field she continues to enjoy.



“There’s a sense of satisfaction when things reconcile,” she said. “I like attention to detail and I work best when working to deadlines.”

Emilia started in September but worked the previous four Tuesdays to get acquainted with the job.

She previously worked for Hopkins Medical Centre for eight years doing similar finance roles and customer service.

After she learns all aspects of her payroll and admin work, Emilia will also be helping on main reception.

She moved to Warrnambool eight years ago from Daylesford to be closer to her parents who live at Yambuk as she raises her two sons.

WRAD Health has also been flexible with Emilia’s working hours, allowing her to leave at 3pm to collect her boys from school.

“Everyone is really accommodating and friendly and it’s a really nice place to work,” she said.

HIGHLIGHTING OVERDOSE RISKS

As part of International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD), WRAD Health turned purple and reminded local people about the risk of accidental overdose deaths, especially from prescription drugs.

The WRAD Health building in Merri Street turned purple on August 31 to recognise IOAD, remember without stigma those who have died or become permanently injured due to overdose, and highlight effective harm reduction strategies, including Naloxone.

AOD clinician Anna Pike said WRAD Health used IOAD to increase awareness of preventable death, including those due to prescription medication.

“The Australian institute of Health and Welfare records prescription opioids as the most common drug class present in drug-induced deaths over the past decade,” Anna said.

However, many of these deaths could have been avoided by using Naloxone that became available with no prescription needed from July 1, 2022.

“Naloxone is for anyone who may experience, or witness, an opioid overdose or adverse reaction,” Anna said. “The person will still need emergency help but Naloxone can give emergency services more time to get to the person. Naloxone is a safe and effective medication that now comes in a nasal spray.”

Naloxone is available from WRAD Health and pharmacies but many don’t realise it’s life-saving potential.

The biggest overdose numbers in Australia are from prescription opiates. Many people don’t realise how easy it is to overdose on prescription medication so it is important to have access to Naloxone.

WRAD Health also provides Naloxone education sessions for interested community members.

People who may benefit from Naloxone or harm reduction or know someone who may benefit from the medication can reach out to WRAD Health on 55645777 or at 172 Merri Street, Warrnambool.

NEW CARING ROLE



After nine years of working in aged care, Stephanie Baxter has found a new outlet for her caring nature.

As WRAD Health's latest AOD trainee, Stephanie is embarking on a new career but care remains at the heart of what she does.

Stephanie is studying through GenU and is getting a head start before officially starting her Certificate IV in AOD next February.

She is currently completing four core units for which she can get credits next year.

"I loved working in aged care, and have a passion for helping and caring for people, but the aged care system is under a lot of stress at the moment, especially during and since COVID," she said.

Now Stephanie has the opportunity to pursue her other passion – supporting people with their mental health.

"Taking that first leap of getting out of my comfort zone and a job I had been in for nine years was a

challenge, but when this job came up, I saw it as a great opportunity," she said.

"There is such a strong correlation between mental health and AOD."

Stephanie gets to concentrate on her studies on Fridays and gets hands-on experience from working alongside WRAD Health staff for the rest of the week.

"It's amazing; I'm with a different clinician every month," she said. "It's really good to have the opportunity to see how different people work and the different approaches they take."

Like a lot of people around Australia, Stephanie, who grew up on a district dairy farm, had some mental health issues of her own. "I know I wouldn't be in the position I am now without the support of my GP, my clinicians and case managers. I feel like I'm now in a position that I can give back. I know when you're in a dark place, there's help there for you."

Now she is relishing the new opportunity. "I'm super passionate about it. Every day different and every day I'm learning new things."

WARP HELPS RECOVERY

Warrnambool Active Recovery Program (WARP) is helping former clients to get on with their lives.

A new group has started with eight participants and peer support worker Cindy Ormiston says they "are all kicking goals in their lives".

"We look at strategies for navigating life's challenges after treatment and talk about the challenges they face," Cindy said.

"It is very peer orientated. The participants

support and encourage each other by sharing their experiences and strategies.

This empowers them and fosters self-determination within the group.

Some of the challenges participants face include re-entering the workforce, managing disappointment, building health relationships, practicing self-care, keeping safe at events or celebrations such as the football finals, implementing relapse prevention skills and coping strategies.

Cindy says the program is having great successes. "Some have gone on to find employment and achieve significant goals in their lives".

WARP is a post-treatment space that encourages social connection helping participants regain confidence and equips participants with skills to navigate daily life.

EARLY STARTS

People turning up early for a 9am appointment at WRAD Health now have a warm place to wait.

While the first appointments remain at 9am, the reception area is now open from 8.45am with reception staff developing a roster with one staff member being in the office at 8.30am.

Finance and administration support officer Tracey van Rooy said that patients are now able to wait inside for their appointment. "Previously if patients arrived earlier than 9am, they had to wait outside which wasn't ideal for the elderly or patients with mobility issues," Tracey said.

"Having reception open before 9am means we can deal with messages left on the answering machine, have all computers on, other necessary admin sorted and be completely ready for the day to best serve our patients and clients."

STEPPING UP

Step Thru Care is now well established, bringing a new style of care to the region.

Since July 1, Step Thru Care Regional Care Partnerships (RCP) Mental Health and AOD has seen see a number of organisations working together to provide integrated care for individuals. This includes Mind Australia as the lead agency, WRAD Health, Portland District Health, Brophy Family and Youth services Inc and genU.

The Step Thru program is designed to maximise client pathways and to implement a multi-disciplined approach which includes a peer worker.

WRAD Health operations manager Chris Kendall said it was providing more options for clients in relation to their mental health as well as their AOD treatment.

"It expands the availability of services for WRAD Health clients in relation to mental health," Chris said.

The partners meet weekly to track progress and Chris says the new care system is starting embed itself and work well for clients.

For more information about RCP referrals or assistance to direct your referral to the correct location please contact the Mind Customer Service Centre on 1300 286 463.

HOMELESS CONNECTION

WRAD Health is reaching out to local people doing it tough.

Project Connect provides services to people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness in the community, creating a much-needed link to health care.

The outreach program is funded Western Victoria PHN and aims to build a rapport with potential clients and try to help them to access medical or AOD support as required.

The service is staffed by practice nurse Emily Curran and alcohol and other drug clinician Hayley Elliott who visit places where people who are homeless or vulnerable may attend.

The program aims to engage people into comprehensive medical care through provision of a holistic approach providing the opportunity for assessment of a person's physical health needs and if required further assessment and management of drug and alcohol and/or mental health related conditions.

It is estimated that 50 people in every 10,000 are experiencing homelessness in Australia.

WRAD Health's Handbury Medical Suites offers a full range of general bulk billing medical services that are available to everyone.

GROUP REFORMS

The WRAD Health consumer participation group has been revived, providing valuable insight from former and current clients.

Peer support worker Cindy Ormiston is coordinating the newly reformed group which had been in hiatus since the pandemic.

The role of the group is to provide feedback on the functioning and delivery of services from a consumer's perspective. For example, things WRAD Health does well, identifying gaps in service delivery and things they feel could be improved.

The current consumer participation committee consists of eight members who meet every three months providing advice and feedback allowing WRAD Health to continually review and improve its overall delivery of service.


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